

Reducing Patient Falls whilst in Hospital: Advice for Patients, Carers and Relatives

This leaflet is to tell you how we try to prevent patient falls, and what you and your visitors can do to help.

Sometimes patients experience a fall while in hospital. This may be because of a sudden change in health, disorientation due to unfamiliar surroundings, the effect of new medication or mobility and balance problems.

Unfortunately, accidents can happen at any time, but we will do our very best to minimise this risk, respecting your freedom to move around and your wishes at all times. We hope the following information will assist you, your relatives and carers to reduce the chance of a fall while you are in hospital. However, if you have any questions please do ask any member of staff.

Our advice to patients:

- If you have fallen at home in the past 12 months, please let us know
- If you are anxious about falling (again), please let the nursing staff know
- Be honest with the nurses and therapists when you feel anxious about moving around.
- If you need help or have been asked by any of the staff to ask for assistance to move around the ward, please use the nurse call bell
- Use the nurse call bell for assistance if you feel weak, unsteady or dizzy
- Do not get up in the dark alone, use the call bell for help
- Be careful and take your time when standing up or getting out of bed.
- Take your time when walking
- Do not use hospital furniture (e.g. bed tables, lockers) to help you stand up and move around as they are on wheels.
- Keep your personal items within easy reach.
- Ensure that you wear your prescribed glasses and hearing aids
- Use any walking aids given to you by the physiotherapists
- Wear non-slip well fitting slippers or shoes while you are on the ward
- To help prevent you tripping, wear clothes that are not too long or too loose
- Report any problems such as spills, trailing wires or cables to staff
- Ask your relatives or carers to take any unused items home to reduce bedside clutter
- Listen to the advice given to you by the therapy team or nurses
- Remember, the hospital is not as familiar to you as your home.

Our advice to relatives, carers or friends:

- Inform staff of any previous falls or concerns you may have about the patient falling while in hospital
- Tell us if the patient has had any previous falls
- At the end of your visit, please put your chair away
- Inform the nursing staff before you leave and ensure that the patient realises that you are leaving
- Place the nurse call bell near the patient as you leave
- Ensure the patient has well fitting non-slip footwear and clothing that is not too loose or long
- Bring in any glasses or hearing aids which have been left at home and inform the ward staff that you have brought these items into hospital
- Minimise clutter by taking unnecessary items home

Looking after patients who may be at risk from falling:

Although falls cannot always be prevented, we assess all adult patients on their admission to identify risks and put steps into place to reduce the chance of them having a fall

If you or your relative is assessed as being at risk of a fall, we may use some of the following steps to minimise the risk:

- Move the patient's bed closer to the Nurse's station.
- Using bed rails to stop a patient from rolling out of bed.
- Carefully monitoring the patient, which may be continuous or at set periods of time
- Using an ultra low bed (which is lowered to almost floor level) when the use of bedrails is not suitable. Sometimes a padded mat or mattress will be placed on the floor next to the ultra low bed
- Using bed and or chair sensor alarms

Please remember:

The measures detailed in this leaflet are designed to minimise the risk of patients falling whilst in hospital. However, we cannot restrain patients or deprive them of their liberty. We will always adhere to patient's wishes or act in their best interests if they

are unable to express their wishes or they lack capacity to make judgement about safe moving.

Some patients will still fall even if we have done all the things mentioned in this leaflet. Being in hospital does not mean that we can prevent falls. However, by working in partnership with patients, their relatives and carers, we aim to minimise the risk of falls.

If you have any further concerns regarding falls, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff

Falls service contact number: 0191 4453843

If you would like further information, the following websites may be useful:

Age UK – www.ageuk.org.uk

National Osteoporosis Society – www.nos.org.uk

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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